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Recruiting Capable Men for the Teaching Profession

An Analytical Cooperative Study

By National President William S. Gray, assisted by District Deputy Ralph E. Carter,
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DURING the Spring of 1921 the Executive Committee of Phi Delta Kappa secured recommendations from district deputies and local chapters concerning problems which could be investigated by the fraternity as a whole. The problem which was most frequently and vigorously recommended was entitled: "Recruiting Men for the Teaching Profession." Inasmuch as there is great need for more keen-minded, capable men for positions of leadership in the field, and for productive research work in the field and in the laboratory, a detailed study of the problem was undertaken.

As a first step in the investigation it seemed advisable to secure the cooperation of members of the fraternity in a careful analysis of the problem. Three questions were prepared for the purpose and were sent to approximately seventeen hundred representative members. A list of the questions follows:

- 1. What in your judgment are the most important reasons why more of the most capable young men who graduate from high schools do not prepare for life careers in education?*
- 2. What steps can the fraternity as a whole take to improve or to eliminate at least two of the conditions mentioned above?*
- 3. What practical steps can individual members of the fraternity take to induce (a) high school seniors and (b) college students to prepare systematically and thoroughly for careers in education?*

Although the questions were not sent out until the sixth of August, more than three hundred answers had been received by September first, at which time it was necessary to begin the work of tabulation. In order to facilitate the preparation of a summary report the work involved was distributed as follows: William S. Gray and Guy M. Hoyt, a graduate student at the University of Chicago, tabulated the answers to the first question and prepared the corresponding section of the report; Leonard V. Koos, District Deputy for the Northwest District, prepared the second section of the report; and R. E. Carter, District Deputy for the Southern District, prepared the third section. The tabulations and discussions which follow are based on the answers submitted by three hundred members of the fraternity. They are not offered as a final solution of the problem in any sense of the word, but merely as a detailed analysis preliminary to more scientific studies of particular phases of the problem.

Question I

What in Your Judgment Are the Most Important Reasons Why More of the Most Capable Young Men Who Graduate From High Schools Do Not Prepare for a Life Career in Education?

The answers which were received differed widely, as was expected. It was possible, however, to group the answers under ten headings. These general answers, together with their frequencies, appear in the table which follows:

ANSWERS	FREQUENCIES
Inadequate salaries	184
Lack of respect for Education as a profession	163
Peculiarities and defects in the profession	102
High School pupils not informed.....	77
Lack of permanence of position.....	69
Defects of those in the profession....	52
Defects in attitudes and qualities of High School students	38
Lack of respect for those in the profession	19
High School students misinformed....	13
Pressure of immediate economic demand	10

The full significance of the statements contained in the table can be secured only through an analysis of the answers which were submitted. In the discussions which follow an attempt is made to present a detailed summary of the answers relating to each explanation. Because of the varied character of the answers it seemed advisable to present the summary for each of the first three statements in tabular form.

INADEQUATE SALARIES: In view of the present economic situation it was in harmony with natural expectation to find inadequate salaries mentioned most frequently. An analysis of the answers which were submitted resulted in the following list of explanatory statements:

STATEMENTS	FREQUENCIES
1. Salaries paid not commensurate with ability and preparation required	121
2. Business and professional careers more attractive financially.....	22
3. Current emphasis in society on large financial success.....	19
4. Inadequate increase with length and efficiency of service to provide the standards of living demanded by aggressive men.....	7
5. Initial and terminal salaries too low	6

6. Instability of salaries.....	3
7. Power and influence accompanying wealth lacking	2
8. People in the profession are unable to accumulate.....	2
9. Little or no opportunity to become independent financially	2

The explanatory statements concerning inadequate salaries make it clear that careers are much more attractive financially in other fields than in education. It is also evident that one of two steps must be taken: either the salaries paid in education must be commensurate with the ability and preparation required or equally strong motives of another character must be found for inducing young men to enter education.

LACK OF RESPECT FOR EDUCATION: The criticism contained in this statement is very serious. An analysis of the answers which were submitted revealed some of the reasons for the current critical attitude toward education as a profession:

STATEMENTS	FREQUENCIES
1. Considered a woman's job.....	83
Preponderance of women	
Few realize that it is a man's job	
Men not attracted to a field dominated largely by women	
Social stigma of doing a woman's work	
2. Lacks respect and dignity of other professions	28
3. Public does not respect leadership in education	21
4. Not yet recognized as a profession	16
5. Considered merely as a stepping stone	6
6. Critical attitude of many communities toward schools.....	6
7. Futility of older educational ideals and inadequate foundation in science of the newer technique....	1

The explanations which are listed may be summarized in two significant statements: First, education is considered as a woman's job and does not make a strong appeal to capable, ambitious young men. The remedy for this situation lies in the development of vigorous leadership in education of a type which will appeal to the most ambitious youth. Sec-

only, education is not recognized as a highly respected science. The remedy for this difficulty lies in thoroughly scientific work both in the field and in the laboratory which will command the genuine respect of men in all fields.

PECULIARITIES AND DEFECTS IN THE PROFESSION: Closely associated with lack of respect for education as a profession are numerous statements of peculiarities and defects in the profession. The following are typical and indicate some of the lines along which constructive effort is very necessary:

STATEMENTS	FREQUENCIES
1. Opportunities for social and political activities limited.....	28
2. Failure to rate teachers on the basis of preparation	9
3. Inadequate standards of admission	6
4. Job does not require or challenge strong men in many cases.....	6
5. Not strongly enough organized to attract	5
6. Inadequate standards of preparation and inadequate recognition given to training	5
7. Poor teaching	5
8. Administration imposes restrictions on freedom of thought and activity	5
9. Frequently too difficult and exacting	5
10. Not a full time job.....	4
11. Positions depend too much on politics	4
12. Not enough men in profession to attract young men.....	4
13. Petty annoyances	4
14. Indefiniteness and wordiness in education courses	3
15. Failure to promote on basis of merit	3
16. Ethics of profession restricts individual freedom of action.....	1
17. Remoteness from industrial and commercial activities	1
18. Too few large jobs at the top....	1
19. Too much petty supervision	1
20. Lacks opportunity for self-display and fame	1

Defects of Those in the Profession: A surprisingly large number of answers contained critical statements concerning those in the profession. Some of these statements are quoted at this point in the order of their frequency. Teachers fail to show disposition and character which attract; teachers are theoretical rather than practical; teachers lack well-developed professional spirits; teachers frequently fail to measure up to the ideals of young people who are ambitious; too few thoroughly trained men in teaching positions; many teachers fail to recognize the importance of the profession and do not recruit capable men into it. It is apparent that remedial steps for

these conditions must include a more deliberate selection of teachers in the future and a personal effort on the part of each one in the profession to overcome relevant defects and peculiarities.

High School Pupils Not Informed: Seventy-seven members of the Fraternity stated in one form or another that High School pupils are not adequately informed in regard to the opportunities for careers in education. Some of the statements which were included follow: Lack of information and adequate publicity concerning the profession (34); teachers give evidence of dissatisfaction and even discourage young men from selecting teaching as a profession (19); opportunities for social service not emphasized (7); education never discussed as a field of heroic service (6); teachers seldom urge young men to enter the profession (7); young men are not informed of better salaried positions (4); teaching seldom described to High School students as a man's job (1). It is apparent that some of the difficulties emphasized in these statements can be eliminated through concerted effort on the part of High School principals.

Lack of Permanence: Sixty-nine members of the Fraternity emphasized lack of permanence as an explanation for the selection of teaching as a profession by so few capable young men. Of this number forty-six referred to the insecurity of teaching positions under present conditions. Other explanations which were suggested: At the mercy of politicians; frequent change of residence necessary; unable to establish a permanent home; no promising outlook; no future after forty years of age; few tenure laws. In attempting to make the profession more attractive it is apparent that problems relating to tenure must be seriously considered.

Defects in Qualities and Attitudes of High School Pupils: We would not be justified in expecting all capable High School pupils to possess the qualities and attitudes essential to success in teaching. Most of the explanations which

(Continued on page 14)

Question I

(Continued from page 11)

were offered, however, emphasize defects which can be overcome largely through appropriate instruction. Ten explanatory statements in the order of their frequency follow: Lack of vision and spirit of service; see no thrilling experiences in teaching; dislike working with children; do not care to assume responsibilities involved; fail to see the importance of a life career; few are temperamentally fitted; dislike prospect of dealing with poor students; lack confidence in ability to handle a teaching position successfully; attitude warped by low level of teaching encountered; teaching not their idea of success.

High School Students Misinformed: Closely associated with the defects in the qualities and attitudes of High School pupils is the fact that they are frequently misinformed. Several sources of misinformation follow: The business world depreciates the value and status of teachers; teachers advise students to select **anything** else; newspapers emphasize the unattractive; exceptionally unattractive cases discourage many; apologetic attitude of teachers creates wrong impressions of the profession. To counterbalance such influences leaders in the profession must give adequate publicity to the attractive phases of careers in education.

Lack of Respect for Those in the Profession: It has been mentioned frequently throughout the earlier discussions that there is lack of respect in many quarters for those in the teaching profession. Teachers are frequently considered unworthy examples for young people to imitate. The social status of teachers is very low in many communities. School men are frequently not credited with good business sense. Many parents are extremely critical of the character and work of teachers. All of these conditions do much to discourage ambitious, capable young men from entering the profession.

Pressure of Economic Demands: In some cases young men who might otherwise select teaching find it impossible to make the necessary preparation on account of the pressure of immediate economic demands. It is evident that we are confronted with a peculiar situation. In order to attain a position of leadership in education a great deal of money and time are necessary. Those who are so fortunate as to have these usually find more interesting and attractive opportunities in other fields. If we retain high standards of preparation we must in some way or other make the salaries commensurate with the ability and preparation required.

Summary: In concluding this section of the report the reasons why a larger number of capable young men do not prepare for careers in education are presented in four groups:

ANSWERS	FREQUENCIES
Group I—Relating to the profession itself	265
Lack of respect for education as a profession	163
Peculiarities and defects in the profession	102
Group II—Relating to salaries and tenure	253
Inadequate salaries	184
Lack of permanence	69
Group III—Relating to High School students	133
Not informed	77
Defects in qualities and attitudes	38
Misinformed	13
Immediate economic demands ..	10
Group IV—Relating to those in the profession	71
Defects of those in the profession	52
Lack of respect for those in the profession	19

The summary indicates clearly that constructive steps must be organized along four general lines: The profession itself must be brought to a higher level of efficiency and respectability; salaries and tenure must be adjusted so as to secure permanency and compensation appropriate to the ability and preparation required. High School students must be fully informed in regard to the opportunities for attractive careers in education; and those in the profession must take steps to overcome individual peculiarities, must take keener interest in their work and must become more scientific and effective in professional activities.

This article, questions two (2) and three (3), will be concluded in the February number